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Minutes

Alumni Association Board of Directors

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Alumni Association Executive Board, Illinois Wesleyan University

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**Illinois Wesleyan Alumni Association  
Minutes of the Executive Board Meeting  
October 4, 2002**

**Board members present:** Jean Baird '80, Patricia Bass '66, Ray Berger '70, Kris Condon '84, Carl Dixon '70, Todd French '93, Sherry Graehling '72, Marsha Guenzler-Stevens '78, Scott Huch '86, Barbara Nielsen '85, Larry Rollings '67, Mark Sheldon '70, Amy Tenhouse '97, Dayna Vidas '03, Tracy Wych '77.

**Guest:** Lonnie Smith '94

**Board members unable to attend:** Debra Burt-Frazier '75, Jim Graehling '72, Deon Hornsby '97, John Horton '82, Ansel Johnson '81, Marilyn Neis '71, Tom Neis '70, Laura Sahn '04, Britt Travis '81, Steve Wannemacher '73.

**IWU Administration/Staff present:** Emmalyn Dickinson, Alumni Relations Office Coordinator; Celeste Flachsbart, Associate Director of Development—Southwest Region; Marty Keller, Director of the Annual Fund; Marleen Monts, Coordinator of Annual Fund Projects and Alumni Activities; Sara Powell '72, Associate Director of Development-Chicago Region; Steve Seibring '81, Director of Alumni Relations; Lora Wey '88, Associate Director of the Annual Fund/Class Agent Program

**Welcome:**

The meeting was called to order by Mark Sheldon, Alumni Association Executive Board President. Mark thanked everyone for coming and welcomed those members and guests who were attending for the first time—Marsha Guenzler-Stevens '78, Tracy Wych '77, Kris Condon '84, and Lonnie Smith '94.

**President's Report:**

President Minor Myers updated the Executive Board as to the University's progress this past year. In his update, he noted the following:

- This past year was a record year in student applications for IWU.
- The acceptance rate for this year was in the 40% range and, for a while, the yield was over 40%. The yield fell to 39% due to dropouts over the summer.
- The graduation rate is now over 80%. We hope for 90%.
- This year's freshman class has the highest academic profile in the school's history.
- The campus goal has been 2,000 students—we now have 2,104 students.
- This has been a much better year for minority admissions. Five Wade McCree students from Detroit are first year students here. Wade McCree is a program for Detroit ninth graders that matches students from the inner city of Detroit with potential colleges. IWU is the only private school, and the only school outside of the state of Michigan, that participates in this program.
- New faculty this year includes a former Marshall Scholar in the English Department, a new religion professor, and a physics professor who has discovered new asteroids and even has one named for her.

- IWU's endowment fund continues to be hurt by the market.
- President Myers, Ken Browning and Craig Hart are meeting regularly to review the University's economic status. They have developed scenarios for the next four to five years.
- Modest, but real salary increments of 2.5% are planned.
- Supplies and equipment are not being increased, but they are also not being cut.
- Increases in spending for faculty research, faculty travel and the library are planned.
- In this economic environment, the success of the annual fund is even more critical.
- *U.S. News and World Report's* latest ranking of liberal arts colleges places IWU in the top 50 overall, but, with regard to alumni satisfaction (based on alumni giving), IWU is number 114.
- Minor asked the Executive Board to consider how we can improve alumni participation in giving.
- Minor concluded his remarks by announcing that CNN Money.Com features Executive Board member, Todd French, in a series called *Millionaires in the Making*. Todd has become the largest internet dealer for string instruments.

In response to a question regarding student retention, Minor noted that he would like to see the University's overall rate reach the level of Dennie Bridge's basketball team. As coach he had a 95% graduation rate for his basketball players. Minor also noted that IWU's graduation rate for minority students is not significantly different than the school's overall rate, and, in some years, it has been higher.

A number of Executive Board members emphasized the need for IWU to continue to focus on the prize; i.e., enhanced academic excellence, improved quality of students, increased retention and diversity. If it does this, the rankings will take care of themselves.

Carl Dixon expressed to Minor his concern over the recent decision by the Alumni Office to add a new position without first consulting the Executive Board. Carl believes this action conflicts with what he had understood would be the role of the Executive Board in the decision making process. Carl thought the University wanted to create an empowered Alumni Association modeled after Carleton's. He feels the Alumni Office's recent decision to add an Assistant Director to its staff without consulting the Executive Board undermines this process. Carl expressed hope that, in the future, the University will consult with the Executive Board before making decisions that impact the Alumni Association.

President Myers responded that he liked the idea of the Executive Board taking a vested interest in the activities of the University and encouraged the Board to do some planning on its own.

### **Alumni Fund:**

Marty Keller presented John Horton's report on the annual fund. John's report highlighted the following:

- The 2002 Annual Fund concluded ahead of the 2001 campaign, but failed to meet its goal of \$1.683 million.
- The 2002 Annual Fund = \$1,513,938 (2001 Annual Fund = \$1,423,720)
- Donor participation increased in 2002 to 4,745 (2001 = 4,669)

- Current strategies to increase annual fund participation and dollars includes the following:
  - Promote positive feeling of stewardship to current IWU students which includes enhancing our image with current students and making sure we know how to contact them when they leave school.
  - Increase the number of alumni fund challenges. These have been very successful in the past (alumni challenges, trustee challenges, etc.)
  - Encourage credit card giving.
  - Focus on a stronger reunion class giving program (this year's reunion goal is \$600,000 for which we have already raised 1/3 in gifts and pledges plus \$150,000 in deferred gifts.)
  - Build a bigger army of volunteers.
  - Increase direct mail and personal contacts

Board members responded to this report with the following suggestions/recommendations:

- Find ways to reenergize and increase the number of alumni volunteers.
- Consider more ways to credit alums with gift-in-kind contributions; i.e., give Executive Board members and Trustees gift-in-kind credit for their travel expenses to IWU meetings.
- Be careful about creating a campaign focused on increasing alumni participation. Pat Bass noted that Colorado College found this to be a very expensive campaign because the average gift was so small.
- Work on cultivating alumni. Continue improving connections with alumni and work on enhancing alumni loyalty.
- Continue efforts to obtain alumni e-mail addresses. Ask for e-mail addresses at all events. (Steve Seibring noted that we should obtain a significant amount of e-mail addresses when we get an online directory—at this point we have a verbal agreement for establishing an online directory.)

### **Executive Board Task Force on the Alumni Fund:**

Mark Sheldon reported that he would like the Executive Board to take a more active role in the University's development efforts and alumni activities. Mark proposed the formation of a task force of alumni with specific expertise to study the issues related to growing the annual fund and increasing alumni involvement. The task force would report its findings and recommendations to the Executive Board at its May meeting. At that time, the Executive Board would consider and debate the group's recommendations and develop a strategy to present to various parties within the University. If the Executive Board approves this approach, Mark will send out terms of reference for the group within the next two to three weeks. A motion to approve Mark's request to establish a task force was made by Carl Dixon, seconded by Pat Bass and approved by the Executive Board.

### **Newsletters:**

Mark Sheldon introduced Kris Condon and recommended that she be added to the membership of the Executive Board. The motion to add Kris Condon to the Executive Board was made by Marsha Guenzler-Stevens. Pat Bass seconded the motion. The motion was approved by the Executive Board.

Kris distributed a handout on the current status and future plans for class newsletters. She discussed the following issues:

- Current alumni communication is primarily through:
  - IWU magazine
  - Class newsletters published twice annually
  - IWU Web site
  - E-connection newsletter
- Class newsletter editors cultivate alumni by:
  - Keeping them connected to the campus
  - Reconnecting classmates and locating lost alumni
  - Promoting homecoming and class reunions
  - Encouraging financial support of IWU
- Benefits of class-specific newsletters:
  - Alumni respond frequently and directly to editor
  - A "personal touch"
  - Class-specific content
- Disadvantages to class-specific newsletters:
  - Duplication of efforts between University Communications and editors
  - Timing issues
  - Editors each writing own versions of campus news
  - A large amount of resources (staff time and cost) required to produce newsletters for every class
- Suggestions by editors for improving communications:
  - Alter format to have a universal "campus news" section for all newsletters
  - Deliver newsletter via e-mail
  - Include alumni notes in the IWU Magazine

Mark asked that the Board empower Kris to talk with Steve Seibring and Jeff Hanna about how to enhance alumni communication through newsletters or other media. A motion was made by Sherry Graehling and seconded by Scott Huch to have Kris work on this project. The motion was passed by the Executive Board.

### **Theatre Alumni Reunion Report:**

Pat Bass reported on the theatre reunion that was held this summer in honor of John Ficca's and Jared Brown's retirement. Approximately 170 people attended the reunion ranging from the class of 1949 to the present. The weekend events included workshops, seminars, etc. The final event was a tribute to John Ficca that Pat characterized as "incredible". Alumni during this tribute performed several segments of John Ficca's plays. Pat noted that theatre graduates realized how lucky they were to have attended IWU because of the sense of family they experienced here on campus. Pat also reported that seeing the new library and student center heightened alumni awareness of the need for a new theatre.

### **Nominations and Elections:**

Larry Rollings reported the results of the random draw for Executive Board terms as follows:

- Three-year term = Jean Baird '80, Ray Berger '70, Kris Condon '84, Jim Graehling '72, Sherry Graehling '72, Barb Nielsen '85, Larry Rollings '67, Mark Sheldon '70, Amy Tenhouse '97.
- Two-year term = Debra Burt-Frazier '75, Carl Dixon '70, John Horton '82, Scott Huch '86, Ansel Johnson '81, Marilyn Neis '71, Tom Neis '70, Tracy Wych '77.
- One-year term = Pat Bass '66, Todd French '93, Marsha Guenzler-Stevens '78, Deon Hornsby '97, Laura Sahn '04, Britt Travis '81, Dayna Vidas '03, Steve Wannemacher '73.

Larry noted that all Executive Board members are eligible for a full three-year term. So, those members who were not assigned a three-year term via the random draw may elect to remain for an additional three-year term when their initial one- or two-year term ends.

Larry Rollings moved for adoption of these term assignments. Amy Tenhouse seconded the motion. The Board voted to adopt the term assignments presented by Larry Rollings.

Larry reported that the Alumni Association would not need to solicit trustee nominations for the next two years. However, solicitation for 2003 alumni award nominations will begin by the first of the year. The process will be the same as last year.

Mark Sheldon asked that the Nominating Committee also consider presenting special awards in 2003. He noted that this year the Alumni Association is honoring the Parent Fund founder, former IWU students who were instrumental in the creation of the Hansen Student Center, and Ruth Barnard who has for a number of years coordinated fan bus trips to the away men's basketball games.

Mark also asked Board members to think about potential candidates for awarding honorary degrees. He would like to develop systematic criteria for awarding honorary degrees. He asked Board members to consider truly distinguished academics, those with a distinguished record of community service and those who have exhibited a prolonged pattern of philanthropy to IWU and elsewhere.

Steve Seibring also asked Board members to think about alumni who would be good commencement speakers. He noted that Frankie Faison's commencement speech was extremely well received by the graduates last year. He noted that there is real value in having someone with a personal relationship to the University give the commencement address. He asked that Board members send him their recommendations for commencement speaker.

Mark Sheldon thanked Larry Rollings for all his hard work as head of the Nominating Committee this past year.

### **Alumni Association Bylaws:**

Scott Huch reported that the Alumni Council inadvertently approved an older version of the bylaws that did not include certain necessary language. Scott stated that he would circulate a

draft of the correct language and have Board members vote via e-mail to approve the revised language. He moved that his method for correcting the bylaws be approved by the Board. Sherry Graehling seconded the motion. The Board approved the Scott's motion.

### **Alumni Presence in Hansen Student Center:**

Mark Sheldon reported that he and Steve Seibring have been working with the student senate president and vice president to create an environment within the Hansen Student Center that will showcase the University's history and important alumni contributions and honors.

### **Regional Update:**

Carl Dixon reported that he was concerned about the fact that the Alumni Office had made a decision to restructure its office without first consulting the Executive Board. A new staff person (Assistant Director of Alumni Relations) will be responsible for planning regional activities. Carl expressed reservations about the effectiveness of this new structure and emphasized the need for this new staff member to work closely with regional staff and alumni. Carl also noted that the addition of this staff person could be good for alumni volunteers because they will feel more empowered.

Steve Seibring noted that this administrative decision was made in order to redirect the regional staff to full-time development work and to add an additional staff person to the alumni office to manage events. Steve reported that he is now in the process of putting together the interview team and invited anyone from the Board with an interest in being a part of this team to let him know of their interest. Jean Baird indicated that she would be interested in participating in the interview process.

Steve also noted that he has received resumes from an amazingly strong field of candidates. He also reported that this restructuring of the office is consistent with how the other top 50 liberal arts colleges are organized.

Scott Huch reported on the young alumni event he recently organized and hosted in Washington, D.C. He noted that he planned a five-month lead-time in which he made nine or more separate contacts with alumni through five different channels (e-mail, snail mail, telephone, etc.) He estimated that the cost to the University was approximately \$150. Through this effort, he identified about 70 young alumni in the DC area; many of whom we did not know were there before this event. Eighteen young alums attended the event—1/3 from the class of 2002, 1/3 from the classes of 2000 and 2001, and the remaining 1/3 distributed between the classes of 1986 to 1999. As a result of this event, Scott has identified three young alums who are interested in working on future events. A second event for DC is already scheduled and more are in the works.

### **Reunion Report:**

Ray Berger reported on what he has done this past year to improve the effectiveness of reunions. His efforts include the following:

- Recruiting homecoming chairs earlier (1 ½ to 2 years out). He has already recruited chairs for the 55<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup>, 45<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> reunions for 2003.

- Reviewing homecoming manuals from Carleton and Williams and comparing them to our materials. He noted that the Williams and Carleton models consider reunions a critical tool for promoting alumni giving and have effectively used reunions to increase giving.
- Working on a new reunion manual for IWU that will incorporate fundraising goals along with social activities. This new manual is a planning priority.

Ray reported on the status of Homecoming participation as follows:

- 2000 Homecoming was the most successful in the school's history with over 900 registered attendees. Ray noted that 2000 was also the most successful economic year and IWU's sesquicentennial—two factors that probably contributed to this success.
- 2001 Homecoming attendance was impacted by the events following 9/11.
- 2002 Homecoming registration is currently in the 600+ range, but experience indicates that this should be up about 150 to 200 by the end of the weekend. This uncertain attendance issue is due in part to people not wanting to commit to anything too early. Many wait until the last minute and then drive down the day of the event and expect to be able to participate in any, or all, homecoming activities.
- There has been greater interest in the Back-to-College classes this year.

Current issues Ray is working on include:

- Evaluating the effectiveness of having one combined reunion dinner at the Radisson versus individual class dinners.
- Working on a new reunion manual for 2003 that will include fundraising responsibilities.
- Nurturing committee chairs and getting them to reach out to their classmates.
- Determining ways to get people to officially register for homecoming rather than just showing up.

Board members recommended the following:

- Bring reunion committee members back to campus to call their classmates—personal touch encouraged.
- Outline reunion committee responsibilities.
- Enhance alumni presence on campus by having a specific place for them to go; i.e., establish an alumni house.
- Continue to work on new ways to attract alumni to campus.

Steve Seibring reported that achieving success with its reunions took Carleton two cycles (10 years), and it will take Illinois Wesleyan a long time as well to be as successful as Carleton. However, now that Carleton has gone through two reunion cycles (10 years), its reunion classes now account for 70% of its annual fund.

Steve also commended Ray on his hard work this past year. He noted that this time last year we had two reunion chairs in place for 2002. Ray has six already in place for 2003.



**Homecoming Assignments:**

Mark Sheldon asked Executive Board members to serve as greeters for the alumni luncheon and then stand on the balcony at the back of the performance gym to be recognized at the beginning of the luncheon.

Mark also asked Board members to serve as greeters for the reunion dinner and be a presence on campus during the weekend.

Mark concluded by thanking members for their attendance and participation.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Larry Rollings '67  
Executive Board Secretary  
Illinois Wesleyan University Alumni Association